Insider’s Guide to USDF Awards

Your dressage achievements deserve to be recognized! First in an occasional series. This month: rider awards.

BY PEGGY KLUMP AND CRISTEN BROWN

SYMBOLS OF ACHIEVEMENT: Clockwise from right: Rider performance awards, freestyle bars, dressage seat equitation rider awards, rider medals.
The divergent scope and interests of the USDF membership are reflected in the comprehensive range of awards that the organization offers. And it’s only fitting, given that recognition of dressage achievement is one of our core missions.

In this new series of articles, we’ll help you navigate through the offerings and explain how to earn the various USDF awards. This month, we’ll focus on the popular rider awards.

As the name suggests, USDF rider awards recognize achievement on the part of the rider, not by a specific horse. Several of these awards, including the prestigious USDF rider medals, recognize achievement “through the levels,” and some USDF members strive over a period of years to earn these awards.

Types of Rider Awards

Rider awards fall into four categories:
- **Medals**: Bronze, silver, and gold
- **Freestyle bars**: Bronze, silver, and gold
- **Performance awards**: Training, First, and Second Levels
- **Master’s Challenge awards**: Training, First, Second, Third, Fourth, and FEI Levels.

Eligibility Requirements

USDF rider awards are cumulative, meaning that scores need not be earned in a single competition year. And you may earn a rider award only once at each level; sorry, no multiple bronzes!

Important points to know:
- You must be a current USDF group member (GM) or participating member (PM) in good standing at the time scores are earned in order for scores to count toward rider awards.
- Scores may be earned on more than one horse.
- All horses used to earn scores toward rider awards must each have a USDF Horse Identification Number or be lifetime-registered with USDF at the time scores are earned, unless competing in breed-restricted competitions.
- There are no membership requirements for the horse owner(s), but USDF nonmember fees may apply at certain competitions if an owner is not a current USDF GM, PM, or business member.
- Only scores earned at United States Equestrian Federation-licensed/USDF-recognized dressage competitions may be applied toward USDF rider awards. Over the years, many USDF members have been disappointed to discover that scores earned at non-USDF-recognized competitions, including those outside of the United States, do not count toward rider awards.

Rider Awards FAQ

Do I have to be a current member of USDF in order to earn rider awards?
Yes. For scores to be eligible for USDF rider awards, you must be a current USDF group or participating member at the time scores are earned.

I have earned six eligible scores at Third Level, but none at First or Second Level. Since the USDF bronze medal requires a total of six scores, are my Third Level scores sufficient to earn the medal?
No. All the requirements from each level must be met in order to receive the award.

I have the scores for my silver medal, but I have not earned my bronze. Can I still be awarded the silver medal?
Yes. USDF rider awards may be earned in any order. However, you must earn the corresponding medal prior to receiving the freestyle bar for that level.

I earned the scores for my silver medal in one competition. Is this permitted?
Yes. There is no minimum number of competitions required when earning scores for rider medals or freestyle bars.

I am not a current US Equestrian Federation member, and my horse is not recorded with USEF. Will my scores be eligible for rider awards?
Yes. However, scores must be earned at USEF-licensed/USDF-recognized competitions, so be aware that USEF nonmember fees may apply if you are not a USEF member or your horse is not USEF-recorded.

New Awards for Dressage Seat Equitation

In the 2016 competition year—which begins October 1, 2015—the USDF Rider Awards Program will gain a new category: dressage-seat equitation.

Dressage-seat equitation rider awards will be offered at three levels: **Elementary**, **Accomplished**, and **Elite**. These awards will be available to USDF group and participating members riding in any division. Recipients will each receive a certificate of recognition, a letter of achievement, a specially designed lapel pin, and recognition in the yearbook issue of *USDF Connection*. For complete award requirements, see the USDF website.
Fun Fact
The first USDF rider awards were presented in 1974: Natalie Lamping, now an FEI 4* dressage judge based in Florida, earned her silver medal; and Elizabeth Lewis, now a USEF “S” dressage judge based in Virginia, earned her gold medal.

• Likewise, USEF Rider Test scores, scores earned in opportunity classes, and scores earned in tests ridden hors de concours may not be used toward USDF rider awards.
• Freestyle scores count only toward USDF freestyle bars, not toward rider medals.

Helpful Hints
The USDF Member Guide (available in hard copy and on the USDF website) contains complete details on the USDF Rider Awards Program. Here are some key things to know:
• Scores earned at any test of the level are eligible toward rider awards.
• There are no special qualifying classes or fees required.
• Eligible scores may be used toward more than one rider award. For example, scores used to earn a Rider Performance Award at First level may also be used to meet the First Level score requirements for the USDF bronze medal.
• Rider Performance Awards at Training, First, and Second Levels require scores earned from four different judges.
• Tests with equivalencies that are eligible toward rider awards are detailed in the USDF Member Guide. Tests not listed as equivalencies may not be applied toward rider awards.
  (Note: test equivalencies listed for USDF rider awards do not necessarily apply to all USDF awards or programs.)
• You’ll need to earn a USDF rider medal before you can be awarded the corresponding USDF freestyle bar. For instance, before you can get your bronze freestyle bar, you’ll need to earn your USDF bronze medal.
• Wear your medals and freestyle bars with pride! The USDF online store sells lapel-pin versions of all medals and bars, and you can order yours as soon as the USDF office has processed your award application.
• Lost your rider award? Duplicate or replacement awards are available for a nominal fee. Contact the USDF office.

Rider Awards by the Numbers
Curious as to how many USDF members have earned their medals and other rider awards? We were, too, so we did the math. From 1974 to mid-June 2015, the USDF has awarded:

- 4,625 Qualified Rider awards (award discontinued in 2003)
- 4,280 Rider Performance Awards (1,922 Training Level, 1,541 First Level, 817 Second Level)
- 7,050 bronze medals
- 145 bronze freestyle bars
- 4,154 silver medals
- 178 silver freestyle bars
- 1,161 gold medals
- 88 gold freestyle bars
- 503 Master’s Challenge awards (100 Training Level, 84 First Level, 57 Second Level, 109 Third Level, 64 Fourth Level, 89 FEI levels).

We also wondered who the youngest award recipients are. Here they are as of mid-June 2015:
Rider Performance Award, Training Level: Talia Debrigida (AZ), 7
Rider Performance Award, First Level: Tillie Jones (NE), 9
Rider Performance Award, Second Level: Emily Andreano (CA), 10
Bronze medal: Mary Herbst (NJ), 9
Bronze freestyle bar: Meghan Slaughter (ID), 15
Silver medal: Bobbie Kerr (NY), 12
Silver freestyle bar: Courtney Massie (MI), 15
Gold medal: Ashlyn De Groot (CA), 16
Gold freestyle bar: Kristina Wang (NE), 21.

Did You Know?
The USDF rider medals and other rider awards are open to USDF group members as well as to participating members.

First Level score requirements for the USDF bronze medal.
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How to Get Your Awards

Congratulations on earning the scores for a rider award! Now you’ll need to submit a Rider Performance Awards Application (on the USDF website under Awards / Forms and Documents). Submit the application by September 30 in order to receive your award for the current competition year.

After the USDF office processes your application, you’ll be mailed a certificate of recognition and a letter of achievement. Rider Performance Award recipients each also receive a special embroidered patch.

Your Moment in the Spotlight

After all your hard work, it’s especially gratifying to receive your award in person, and to see a photo of you and your horse in the annual yearbook issue of USDF Connection. Here’s how it works.

Recipients of rider medals, freestyle bars, and Master’s Challenge awards may receive their awards at the Salute Gala and Annual Awards Banquet held in conjunction with the Adequan/USDF Annual Convention. (Can’t attend? Your award will be mailed to you after the banquet.) These same award recipients also may submit photos for publication in USDF Connection’s yearbook issue. See the photo release form on the USDF website under Awards / Forms and Documents for instructions.

Visit USDFScores.com to check your scores on file that may be eligible toward USDF rider awards. You must have a current USDF group, participating, or business membership to access this website. Contact the USDF with any questions: (859) 971-2277 or riderawards@usdf.org.

Peggy Klump, of Rancho Cucamonga, CA, is the chair of the USDF Awards Committee. Cristen Brown is a USDF senior competitions coordinator and the committee’s staff liaison.

US Dressage Finals

Hospitality Sponsorship Opportunity

Show your support to competitors and event staff as a US Dressage Finals Hospitality Sponsor! Hospitality Sponsors will receive valuable onsite exposure to over four hundred of the top competitors from around the country, as they compete at this showcase event.

For a sponsorship of $1,000, Hospitality Sponsors will be listed on a featured page in the event program and highlighted in onsite signage prominently displayed at the welcome party, competitor dinner, and in the competitor lounge and the event staff cafeteria. Additionally, Hospitality Sponsors have the opportunity to include a promotional gift item in the competitor gift bags. Brochures or other marketing materials may also be provided to be made available at the information desk on the concourse.

To take advantage of this and other sponsorship opportunities contact:

Ross Creech
rcreech@usdf.org
(859) 971-7038

Contracts, promotional gifts, and marketing materials must be received by October 15, 2015.